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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to show group leaders how to organize a program on single parents and their families and present this program in two meetings. At the first meeting, presenters provide information about single-parent families; at the second they suggest ways to involve the school, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and other community organizations in the development of specific projects designed to assist such families. Part 1 of the guide summarizes what census data and research reveal about single-parent families--how many there are; the practical and emotional problems they face; and how successfully they cope. Part 2 describes services that schools, PTAs, and communities can provide for single-parent families. Discussion in Part 2 focuses on noncustodial parents, record keeping, in-service training, school curriculum, adult education, parent-school events, peer counseling, information and resources, community projects, child care programs, and other projects. Finally, Part 3 offers instructional resources, including a leader's guide, lists of additional readings for adults and children, an evaluation questionnaire, and visual aids to help the leader present the program. (RH)

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Single Parents AND THEIR Families

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Single Parents and Their Families

A Guide to
Involving School and Community

By

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Developing programs to serve this country's growing number of single-parent families has been identified as a critical need by both the National PTA and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). In late 1982, these organizations contacted Boys Town and proposed a joint project on the topic. "Single Parents and Their Families: A Guide to Involving School and Community" is the result.

The Health and Welfare Commission of the National PTA guided the design of the program; much of the school material was developed and provided by the NAESP and John Ourth, principal of Oak Terrace School in Highwood, Illinois; the guide was written by Barbara Lonnborg and Shelley Leavitt of the Communications & Public Service Division of Boys Town. The booklet was designed by Michael Franks of the Graphix Group in Omaha, Nebraska, and printed by the Boys Town Print Shop, supervised by Carl Kastelic.

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INTRODUCTION

Nine-year-old Nina's parents have separated. Her father has moved out of the house and sees Nina every other weekend. At school, Nina has become very quiet, even withdrawn in class. Usually a good student, she now has trouble concentrating, cries easily, and at times clings to her teacher. Secretly, she fears it was something she did that caused her parents' breakup.

Bobby's mother died a year ago. After school, the fifth grader lets himself in to an empty apartment. On some days, he watches television until his father returns from work; on others, he wanders the neighborhood streets until dusk.

Anne is the divorced mother of three young children. Although the court awarded her child support payments, she does not receive regular checks from her former husband. The family has moved to a smaller home, and Anne is working full-time. After rent, food, clothing, and child care expenses are paid, there is little money left for recreation or entertainment. Anne sees few of her former friends and often feels lonely.

Nina, Bobby, and Anne are undergoing the difficult adjustment that often accompanies separation, death, and divorce. They and their families, like many other single parents and their children, are likely to have fewer people, less time, and skimpier financial resources with which to meet the emotional and practical demands of family life.

Single-parent families are now the fastest-growing household type in this country—they number almost seven million. Many of these families, coping with change and stress, could use our help. Individuals, organizations such as the PTA, and schools could provide some assistance in many different ways.

For example, Nina's school could offer a peer counseling group for children of separated or divorced parents. The group would introduce Nina to children in similar circumstances and might help her to express what she is feeling and see other ways of coping.

Recreational or educational after-school activities run by the local PTA would give Bobby a safe, healthy place to play or study until his father returns from work. A babysitting cooperative or self-help group for single parents might give Anne the social outlet needed to ease her loneliness and renew her energy for her children and job.

These services need not cost a lot of money to provide, and they can give single, working, or stressed parents just the extra resource they need to better care for themselves and their children. Your organization or school could provide one or more of these and other services.

This leader's guide is designed to show you how. It will help you organize and present a two-part program on single parents and their families. The first meeting will inform your group about single-parent families, and the second will suggest ways to get the school, the PTA, and other community organizations involved in developing specific projects to assist these families.

This guide has three sections. Part 1 summarizes what census data and research have discovered about single-parent families—how many there are, the practical and emotional problems they face, and how successfully they cope. Part 2 examines what services schools, PTAs, and communities could provide for these families. Finally, Part 3 offers instructions for presenting the meetings, additional readings, an evaluation questionnaire, and visual aids to help the leader present the program.

Part 1: SINGLE PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Most of us know some single-parent families. They may live next door or down the street. A relative or a friend may have gone through a divorce. Perhaps the parents of one of your children's playmates have separated, or a neighbor's spouse has died. You may be a single parent yourself.

Single-parent families live everywhere—in large cities, in suburbs, in small towns, and in rural areas. They are from all religions, ethnic groups, backgrounds, and income levels. And, like two-parent families, each single-parent family is unique and has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The number of single-parent families has burgeoned in the last two decades. The increase has been so rapid that schools, the legal system, government, industry, and religious institutions are just now beginning to respond to the great changes in society that have resulted. Single parents and their children face many difficult emotional, social, financial, and educational problems.

With the greater mobility of Americans, many of these families also do not have the support that an extended network of relatives and friends could have provided in the past. When single-parent families need some assistance, therefore, schools, community organizations, religious groups, and social agencies should be ready to step in to offer support and services.

This program is designed, first, to increase awareness of single-parent families—both their problems and strengths. Second, it should stimulate discussion about how people and institutions can help these families by putting their ideas into action.

THE NUMBERS

Since 1970, the number of single-parent families has doubled in the United States. Today, there are almost seven million such families, according to Census Bureau data. Back in 1950, almost half of the children living in these families did so because of the death of a parent. Now, divorce and separation of parents account for nearly three-quarters of the single-parent families. Families headed by a widowed parent account for almost 11 percent, and those with a never-married parent make up 17 percent of all single-parent families. (Much of the discussion in this program will focus on the largest group, families headed by divorced or separated parents.)

It is important to note that single-parent families increased most rapidly during the early 1970s. During that time, the divorce rate and the number of births to young unmarried women were increasing. The number of children living with a never-married parent tripled during that decade. Since then, however, the *rate* of increase in single-parent families has slowed, although the *number* of these families continues to grow.

As the divorce rate (one in two) and number of births to unwed women have risen, so has the number of children under 18 years of age living in single-parent homes. In 1980, 20 percent of all children—more than 12 million—lived with one parent. In 1960, only one of 11 children—9 percent—did. By 1990, it is estimated that one of every four children (25 percent) will live with only one parent.

Those figures reflect the number of children living with a single parent at any one time. But divorce is often followed by remarriage, and 85 percent of unmarried mothers eventually marry. Ten percent of the children now living with two parents live with a natural parent and a stepparent. Four of every ten children born in the 1970s will spend a part of their childhood in a single-parent family. In 1990, half of all children will live with only one parent for some time before their 18th birthday.

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

Although the single-parent family has become the fastest growing family type in this country, the effects of living with only one parent are still being investigated. Social scientists, however, have identified some common stresses and difficulties that many single parents and their children experience. Some of these may occur immediately following a separation or divorce and be short-lived; others may be more chronic and long lasting.

Many of the problems and stresses that single parents and their children experience are related to four major areas:

- Economic changes
- Practical responsibilities
- Social and interpersonal relationships
- Emotional adjustment

Economic changes. Although instances of father and joint custody are increasing, mothers still become the custodial parent in nine out of ten cases. For a number of reasons, divorce may have a devastating impact on the economic status of mother-child families—the great majority of single-parent families.

First, courts have become more reluctant to award alimony to divorced wives. Those who are eligible for child support from the absent father have only a 50 percent chance of receiving all of it, according to a 1979 Census Bureau study. And the poorer the mothers are, the less likely they are to receive any payments. One-quarter of all divorced mothers receive no payments at all. Additionally, only 6 percent of mothers who have never married receive any financial support from the child's father.

Another study found that women suffer a 50 percent decline in family income following a divorce, while the man's income typically increases. Although the single-parent family may save some money on expenses for the absent spouse, housing costs generally remain the same and child care expenses tend to increase.

These harsh economic realities usually mean that a full-time job is a necessity for the single parent. In 1980, 71 percent of all single mothers were in the labor force compared to 55 percent of all married mothers.

Women on the average, however, earn less than 60 percent of what men do. A typical three-person family headed by a mother has an annual income of $7,035, while a typical four-person family with two parents earns more than $20,000. Almost half of all mother-child families live below the federal poverty level.

The financial difficulties that single parents experience can in turn affect many other aspects of their lives. For example, following a divorce, the family may have to sell the family home and move to a new neighborhood and a less expensive residence. As a result, neighborhood supports and friendships may be lost and children may have to attend new schools. If the mother had not been previously working, she may now need to find a job and make child care arrangements. The family may have to adjust to a dramatically altered lifestyle.

Practical responsibilities. Single custodial parents are often responsible for all of the daily tasks—child care, cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry—involved in raising a family and maintaining a household. Many are the sole economic support of the family and must work full-time and arrange adequate child care. Major decisions regarding the children's well-being may also rest solely with the custodial parent.

There may be no other adult for a single parent to call on when a family member is sick, to watch the children when the shopping must be done, or to take the babysitter home following an evening out. Without adequate backup support and resources, some custodial parents become physically and emotionally depleted.

When faced with new or excessive demands and limited resources, single parents often experience one of three kinds of overload, according to University of Massachusetts sociologist Robert Weiss. They are:

- Responsibility overload—sole responsibility for all aspects of child rearing and family life can, for some parents, become overwhelming.

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- Task overload—single parents may feel that there is too much to do and not enough time and energy to do it all.
- Emotional overload—unanticipated demands and decisions may deplete the parent's energy and emotional reserve.

Of course, not all single parents experience these conditions. Some, for instance, prefer having sole responsibility for the family. However, without backup support from relatives, friends, or the noncustodial parent—"reserve capability" as Weiss has described it—many single parents experience one or all of these overloads at some point.

Social and interpersonal relationships. Socializing in our society is often organized around couples. Being a single parent, therefore, may limit opportunities for social and recreational activities. Following a divorce, a parent's social life may be restricted and associations with married friends may decline. Single parents may have difficulty meeting new people, developing social contacts, and establishing friendships. One divorced mother told researchers that she felt she had remarried Captain Kangaroo, the adult male she had seen most often since her divorce.

Parents who have not developed other significant relationships and social outlets may experience intense feelings of loneliness. In one recent survey, more than 80 percent of the single parents questioned reported that loneliness was a problem.

Emotional adjustment. Following a divorce, a single parent may feel depressed, anxious, angry, rejected, or incompetent. These negative feelings are most likely to occur in the first year following the divorce and diminish over a two-year period, a study of middle-income divorced couples and their preschool-aged children by Mavis Hetherington, Martha Cox, and Roger Cox found.

Changes in self-concept and self-esteem may also occur after a divorce. In the Hetherington study, women reported feeling a loss of identity and status associated with marriage, feeling unattractive and incompetent. Men expressed feelings of rootlessness, of having no home or structure in their lives. The overriding concern of the fathers was the feeling of loss of their children. But they also reported problems in coping at work and in feeling socially and sexually inept.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

The impact of divorce and the effects of living with one parent can vary considerably among children. While most youngsters feel troubled and emotionally upset when their parents separate and divorce, their reactions can differ widely. Some children feel angry, disobey, or show aggression. Others withdraw and become listless, quiet, or moody. For young children especially, a divorce may produce feelings of guilt. The children may blame themselves for their parents' troubles and breakup. Older children may feel sad or frightened over the change that is taking place in the family.

For some youngsters, the change may produce difficulties only in the beginning. After a time, the transition becomes easier. Behavior problems such as disobedience, aggression, whining, and demanding are most marked in the first year following a divorce and more predominant in boys, according to Hetherington's study. Two years after a divorce, however, these problems tend to decrease.

Recent research suggests that a child's adjustment to changes in the family structure may be easier when some of these conditions exist:

- The noncustodial parent maintains an active and close relationship with the child.
- Parents cooperate and are consistent with regard to child rearing.
- Conflict between ex-spouses is minimized.
- Other supports (relatives, friends) are consistently available.

When there are adjustment problems, they may occur at home, at school, or in both settings. Every child is different, and each may have his or her own way of showing distress and coping.

At home. The emotional stress and difficulty that children experience following a divorce may be shown in many ways. Some of the problems that parents frequently mention are:

- Bedtime problems—bedwetting, having nightmares, refusing to go to bed or to sleep alone.
- Bodily complaints—headaches, stomachaches, leg cramps.
- Disruptive and annoying behaviors—throwing temper tantrums, whining, pouting, demanding, complaining.
- Noncompliance—disobedience, refusing to follow instructions.

Many of these problems, however, may be temporary. As the adjustment to the change in the family is made and the stress diminishes, these problems usually lessen too. However, after adjusting to the new family structure, children may be faced with yet another change if either parent remarries. Since the majority of parents eventually do remarry, many children will become part of a stepfamily. This change may produce emotional stress and anxiety once again for the youngsters involved. Some children may be hostile to or jealous of the new spouse or stepchildren. Others, such as those children who have had little or no contact or relationship with the noncustodial parent, may welcome the new family members. Their reactions and subsequent adjustments to this transition may vary depending on factors such as their age, their relationship with their custodial and noncustodial parents and with the stepparent, and the kind of preparation for the remarriage the parents provide.

At school. There is a greater tendency for couples to divorce after their children have reached school age. Often, therefore, the emotional stress of family change is displayed in behavioral and academic problems at school. Difficulties at school, like those at home, may vary according to the age of the child, the kinds of family relationships and organization that exist, and the availability of other supports.

Additionally, children manifest difficulties at varying times. Some may develop problems just before the separation or divorce or immediately following the departure of one parent. Stress reactions in other children, however, may not surface for many months, perhaps even years.

Past research has suggested that children from single-parent families show lower achievement in school than children from two-parent families. However, recent studies indicate that achievement in school is also closely related to the sex of the child and family income.

Following a divorce in the family, boys tend to experience more behavioral and academic problems at school than girls do. But the effect on previously successful students—boys and girls—may not be as noticeable or severe.

For many children, however, school work begins to suffer because they may be unable to concentrate or pay attention in the classroom. Or, if the home situation is disorganized and stressful, children may have difficulty doing homework and studying.

Children also display their stress in such ways as these:

- Acting out—being disruptive, aggressive, obstinate, uncooperative.
- Acting moody—sulking, pouting, being withdrawn.
- Seeking attention—showing off, being loud or bossy.
- Expressing feelings of worthlessness, incompetence, or insecurity.
- Not paying attention—daydreaming.
- Assuming adult-like behaviors and attitudes.

Although these problems are often temporary and subside when the family adjusts to a new routine and structure, before they do, the child may fall behind academically, may be shunned by peers, or could become labeled a "trouble maker" or "behavior problem."

Even after a child has adjusted to the family situation, problems and stresses may still occur. A child occasionally may still feel insecure and need close and supportive relationships with peers and other adults. Certain school events (for example, father-daughter dinners, family open house, Mother's or Father's Day projects) are particularly difficult for children from single-parent families. Children may feel sad that they do not have a "normal" family or that they cannot spend holidays with both parents. Children may feel

embarrassed that they have no father or mother at home or that their mother and father have different last names.

However, some children do find the continuity of a familiar school routine, the support of teachers, and friendships with their peers reassuring and comforting during a time of distress at home. School personnel—teachers, counselors, coaches—may be able to help these children by becoming aware of the family situation, and then by offering special tutoring or help with homework, by providing counseling and support, by recognizing and praising their accomplishments, and by helping the youngsters manage their own behavior.

SUCCESSFUL ADJUSTMENT

Much of the research on single-parent families has focused on the problems they face in adjusting to divorce or the death of a parent. There is evidence that following a year or two of difficult transition, many single-parent families have adjusted and found ways to deal with their problems.

Many happy, well-adjusted, and successful people have grown up in single-parent families. Some famous ones include U.S. President Andrew Jackson, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, authors Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Bronte, sports star Reggie Jackson, and entertainers Barry Manilow, Stevie Wonder, and Kristy McNichol.

Single-parent families who are coping well share some common characteristics. What makes them successful, according to a study by Ann Barry, are the ways in which they deal with:

Handling problems. Financial pressures, fatigue, and lack of time with the children still are problems for these families, but they have found ways to deal with them. The single parents settle on some realistic goals and decide to succeed. They recognize their limitations. Most find that their well-being influences the well-being of the entire family. So these single parents set some time aside for themselves, to do things they enjoy. Their work is also considered by the single parents to be an important source of self-esteem.

Rearing children. The parent and children in a successful single-parent family usually recognize that all have to participate to make the family work. The children contribute to family decisions, and they even feel free to criticize or express negative feelings. The parent, however, is clearly seen as the head of the family, and the children cooperate by respecting family rules and completing assigned tasks. Several other studies have found that a shared religious life also helps strengthen family relationships.

Relying on relatives and friends. These families have dependable networks of people who provide emotional, practical, and financial help. Whether it is for child care or moral support, the single parents know they have relatives or friends they can turn to in an emergency. Some of the single parents rely on an old circle of friends; many have made new friendships.

Finding other support. Many of these single parents find assistance in organizations such as their church, synagogue, or a Parents Without Partners chapter. Some have sought professional counseling for themselves or their children. Others have found parent training classes to be helpful.

HELPING SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Now is the time in the program to identify the needs of single parents in your area and to determine how your PTA, group, school, church, or community wants to respond. Before the second meeting, information about local single-parent families and services, if not already available, needs to be gathered. (See the Instructions in Part 3 for suggestions on how to prepare for the second meeting. Participants may need to be asked to volunteer to help collect information or form committees to look into what is or could be done for single parents and their children.)

The first meeting should end with at least a brief consideration of what participants, as individuals, can do for single-parent families. Such a discussion should help group members translate their new awareness of the problems these families may face into personal action.

Some of the possibilities for individual responsibility are:

- Helping your child to understand a friend who is undergoing the stress of a parent's death or of separating or divorcing parents.
- Offering friendship to a single parent.
- Including single-parent families in car pools or child care cooperatives.
- "Standing in" for an absent single parent at school or religious functions.
- Offering to be available for emergency baby- or pet-sitting.
- Offering to care for a child after school until his or her custodial parent returns from work.
- Serving as a volunteer to help provide after-school programs for students.
- Staying informed about community services in order to be helpful to single parents who ask for or need your advice or assistance.

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Part 2: SCHOOL, PTA, AND COMMUNITY

By the time a child is 18 years old, he or she has spent more than 2,000 days in school. For many youngsters, school is an important source of continuity and support. It is where friendships are developed, achievements are made, and many important skills and attitudes are learned.

Over the past few years, researchers and educators alike have begun to identify some special needs of children who have experienced a crisis or change in their family such as death of a parent or divorce. Since nearly 20 percent of the nation's school children live with only one parent, many schools have developed specific policies and programs that address the needs of these children.

While the school's primary function is to educate and not to intervene in family matters, the stress associated with a family crisis or change can spill over into the academic setting. Children's learning is often disrupted, and their peer relationships may be strained. Schools may be able to alleviate some of the stress associated with a family crisis or change and help children from single-parent families by becoming more responsive to changes in family patterns and providing additional supports for the children and their parents.

Here are some ideas that educators and researchers offer to help schools become more responsive to the needs of the changing family.

- Review the school's policies and procedures regarding the rights and the role of noncustodial parents.
- Develop a record-keeping system for keeping track of changes in a child's family status.
- Provide inservice training to alert and educate school personnel about changing family patterns and to show them how they can provide support to a distressed child.
- Review how the school's curriculum, textbooks, and other academic materials depict two-parent and one-parent families and encourage classroom discussions that include different family structures.
- Offer PTA programs or adult education courses on topics such as parenting, divorce, and remarriage.
- Sponsor "parent" rather than "mother" or "father" activities and schedule school events and parent conferences at times that are convenient to all parents.
- Set up peer counseling programs or discussion groups for children.
- Gather information about the professional services, support groups, and other resources that are available in the community and set up a family resource center in the school.

Each of these suggestions has been used successfully by various schools across the country. Although developing and implementing some of these ideas may take extra time, effort, and persistence, many of these suggestions do not require additional staff or expensive materials and equipment.

A first step in developing new programs and resources should be to identify the specific needs of your school and to gather information about the resources and support services now operating in your community. Then, see if the school can work with existing supports to fulfill these needs. A more detailed description of each of the suggestions is provided below.

NONCUSTODIAL PARENTS

In a nationwide survey of 1,200 single parents to determine the responsiveness of schools to single-parent family needs, investigators from the National Committee for Citizens in Education found that schools

seldom took the lead in communicating with noncustodial parents. According to the survey, only a very small percentage of noncustodial parents received information about school activities or their children's report cards without requesting them from the school. Noncustodial parents who contacted the schools seemed to fare better. Some attended parent-teacher conferences, were sent school calenders, and regularly received report cards and other information.

School personnel should be aware of the school's policies (formal and informal) regarding the rights and role of noncustodial parents. Under the 1974 Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), unless there is a court order or other legally binding document, all parents—custodial and noncustodial—are entitled to have access to the school records of their children. Furthermore, when a divorce decree or other legal document restricting access exists, the burden of proof rests on the *custodial* parent to produce it.

This act does not require schools to locate noncustodial parents and send report cards and records. It does mean that most noncustodial parents, like custodial parents, have the right to review their children's school records.

Some schools are more responsive to parents without custody than others. Those schools that are often keep regularly updated contact information (addresses and phone numbers) about custodial and noncustodial parents. These schools make specific efforts to contact noncustodial parents either by sending letters or putting notices in local papers that inform them how to obtain records and other school information.

Should schools seek out and encourage noncustodial parents to become involved in school matters? Some authorities believe that sharing school records with noncustodial parents can be beneficial to children. They point out that when both parents are actively involved in a child's life the child may be able to adjust better to changes in the family. This does not mean that schools must track down noncustodial parents. However, they should be aware of the rights of parents without custody and responsive to the needs of parents and their children by providing easier access to information about school records, activities, and parent-teacher conferences.

RECORD KEEPING

Administrative record keeping, a routine and necessary task, has become more complicated and controversial. How much and what kind of personal information about a child and his or her family should be included in school records? Some parents may feel that disclosing their marital status is an invasion of their privacy or that children from single-parent families will be labeled and discriminated against. Record keeping is further complicated by changes in family status that result from divorce or remarriage and by the frequent residential moves and school changes that are typical in our society.

Most educators agree, however, that in order for teachers and counselors to be responsive to the needs of children, they need to be informed when a change or crisis occurs in the family. The classroom teacher who is aware of family changes is a potentially rich source of support for the child. In addition to encouraging parents to inform the school of changes that might affect their children, the school can develop a simple, but systematic method for collecting and updating information on students.

Members of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) who participated in a nationwide study of the needs of children from single-parent families have recommended that schools use a standard form and obtain this information:

- Full names and addresses of the student, the mother, and the father.
- Home and work telephone numbers for both the mother and father.
- A list of the adults who are authorized to pick the child up from school.

Additional information such as the names, addresses, and phone numbers of stepparents, other adult friends, and relatives might also be routinely collected. The registration form used in one school, for example, asks with whom the child lives (both parents, mother

only, father only, or other). There are also additional spaces to list the names and addresses of male and female head of household and the names and addresses of male and female parent if different from head of household.

Schools should also ask parents for instructions in the event of illness or injury or school closing due to weather conditions. The instructions should include the names of those to be notified and who will pick the child up or where the child is to be sent.

Schools can keep track of family changes and update their records by sending a standard information form home with the child at regular intervals, such as at the beginning of each semester. By collecting and updating this kind of information regularly, schools should be able to be more responsive to the family, whether it is to provide the noncustodial parent with school information, to help in the transfer of a student, or to be prepared in case a parental kidnapping occurs. While the school may not be able to prevent or stop an abduction, it can set up policies for releasing children to authorized adults during school hours and develop specific procedures to follow in the event of a kidnapping from school.

INSERVICE TRAINING

School personnel who are aware of and sensitive to signs of stress can often provide a supportive and stable setting for children trying to cope with troubles at home. Inservice training programs can help teachers, counselors, and other personnel become aware of difficulties that some children face and show them how to be more responsive to these children. Principals from NAESP and other experts suggest that schools offer inservice training programs to:

- Provide information about different family patterns (single-parent families, stepfamilies, living-in arrangements) and suggest books, community resources, and other supports that may be helpful to children and their families.
- Encourage school personnel to examine their own attitudes, values, and stereotypes regarding divorce, single-parent families, unmarried mothers, and living-in arrangements.
- Alert personnel to both direct and indirect forms of discrimination against children from different family types (for example, giving students a homework assignment that requires them to interview their fathers about their jobs) and help them become sensitive to language biases and negative remarks regarding family structures ("broken home").
- Help teachers and others recognize signs of stress in children and be aware of personality and behavior changes that may be related to divorce, visits with the noncustodial parent, or other changes in the family setting.
- Teach school personnel ways to provide support, empathy, and understanding to distressed children and be more responsive to their special needs and difficulties.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

How do the school's curriculum, books, and other educational material depict family life? What types of families are represented? Until recently, most of the books and other materials used in schools have shown only two-parent families. Children who do not live with two parents may feel a greater sense of "differentness" and "aloneness" when classroom teaching and materials do not acknowledge other family forms.

Schools should be encouraged to choose textbooks and other educational materials that show a variety of family types—single-parent households, mother- and father-headed families, remarried or "blended" families, and extended families. Courses in family life and discussions of changing family patterns can also provide opportunities for teaching about the many variations in families and can help children feel more secure with their own particular family structure.

Books about family life that are available in the school library should be examined. Are there books for children about divorce, death, and other family changes? If not, the school can order some and create a family life section. (Suggested titles are listed in Part 3.)

ADULT EDUCATION

Through adult education programs and groups like the PTA, school systems can provide inexpensive and effective parenting programs for single as well as married parents. The school and PTA can offer evening courses, seminars, and discussion sessions for parents on topics such as changing family patterns, death, single parenting, divorce, remarriage, effective discipline, and communicating with children. Parent education courses that focus on subjects such as divorce and separation can provide helpful information and support to parents and their children who are in the midst of coping with and adjusting to a new lifestyle.

In some schools, the school counselor may be able to hold evening discussion sessions and programs for parents. However, since fewer than one-fifth of the nation's elementary schools have full-time counselors, most schools will need to locate outside professionals and other qualified persons to make presentations and conduct programs. The "Responsive Parenting Program" developed by Marilyn Clark-Hall in Johnson County, Kansas, for example, trains other parents to be group leaders and to conduct parenting programs in the schools.

In many schools, PTAs have developed and sponsored programs on single parenting, step-parenting and a variety of other topics. The Texas PTA, for example, has developed an audio visual presentation on one-parent families that can be used in a workshop or discussion session.

Whenever possible, offer child care during these programs. Organize car pools and other transportation for those who need it. Enlist the aid of volunteers and service groups—Girl and Boy Scouts, 4-H, Future Farmers or Homemakers of America, high school students, Kiwanis, Lions Club—to help with child care and transportation. When costs are involved for either a program or extras such as child care, try to keep them low, set up a sliding scale for low-income families, or have a "scholarship fund" available for those who can not afford to pay anything.

PARENT-SCHOOL EVENTS

One way that schools can show their sensitivity and responsiveness to the many variations in family structures is to make logistical and procedural changes in the activities and events they sponsor. Instead of holding mother-daughter or father-son events, for example, the school can sponsor "parent" activities. Children living with one parent may not always have a "mother" or a "father" to bring to school events and may feel embarrassed or ashamed that their family is different.

Educators offer these other tips concerning parent-school interactions:

- Adjust the scheduling of school events. Try to schedule parent-teacher conferences at times that will be convenient to both working and nonworking parents. Instead of the usual 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. time period, also schedule conferences for early mornings or late afternoons and evenings. Hold PTA meetings and other activities during lunch times, in the evenings, and on weekends. Try to keep the school office open one or two evenings a month so that the principal and counselor can be on hand to talk with parents.
- Offer child care during school events. Set up a babysitting room and locate volunteers (PTA members, high school students) who can supervise children whose parents are in conferences or attending school events.
- Address school correspondence to the "parent" rather than "parents." Where there is joint custody or co-parenting, send correspondence to both parents and find out if one or both parents want to attend parent-teacher conferences, receive school newsletters, etc.
- Find out the names of the adults living with the child. Don't assume that the parent's last name will be the same as the child's.

PEER COUNSELING

Some schools have found that informal discussion groups led by a counselor or a

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teacher can help children from single-parent families overcome their feelings of isolation and "differentness" and help them communicate their feelings about divorce or death. Peer counseling programs in which groups of students who are experiencing similar problems get together and discuss their feelings, experiences, and ways of dealing with problems have become much more common in schools.

The most publicized peer counseling programs for children of divorce were developed in Lexington, Massachusetts, by Howard Schofield, a high school guidance counselor, and Frank Nelligan, a counselor in an elementary school. The programs were initiated after they discovered that the town had no supportive services directed at helping children cope with divorce. The Lexington programs provide information and support and are voluntary and informal. Children are not actively recruited or pushed into the groups, which are open to all students regardless of family status.

In some schools, evening programs for parents are held to discuss the issues that the student group has brought up. One of the goals of these two groups (parent and student) is to develop more effective communication about divorce between parents and children. (Confidentiality of personal remarks made in the student group, however, is respected.)

Other schools have used a counseling approach that pairs younger and older children from divorced or separated families. The older student gets to know the younger one, helps with homework, and provides support and understanding about their common experiences.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Schools can also provide support to families simply by making information available to teachers and parents. First, find out about the services and resources (counseling services, support and social groups, legal and medical programs) for single-parent and other families that are available in your community. Make a list of the community resources and distribute it to all parents.

Ask the school librarian to arrange a shelf or corner in the library as a parent resource center. Encourage your school to obtain books, pamphlets, and other materials to place there. A number of free publications for parents and children on topics such as divorce, drug abuse, adolescent problems, and parenting are available from the federal government and other organizations.

Set up a bulletin board in the library or elsewhere in the school for information about meetings, community events, family activities, day care, car pools, and other topics and events that are of interest to parents.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Some services to aid single-parent families can be organized and run more efficiently on a community basis rather than at the school level. Funding, volunteers, and expertise can be drawn from a broader base of people. If there is interest in expanding services to single-parent families, a number of steps need to be taken.

Survey the local community to see what services are already available, including those designed specifically for single parents and their children and those that serve a wider public that includes single-parent families. Examples of such services are recreational programs, job retraining, day care facilities, and counseling centers.

Consider whether existing services are sufficient to meet community needs or are falling short. Are recreational programs overcrowded? Do day care centers have long waiting lists? Or, are some resources available but under-used? Where is there an actual shortage of services, and in what areas do families need only to be informed of existing programs that have the capacity to serve them immediately?

Consult single parents before new service programs are devised. The school might aid in this by agreeing to send a questionnaire from the PTA home that asks these parents what additional services are needed and which ones they or their children would use. Synagogues

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and churches could survey their members. Some of the parents might wish to be involved in designing new programs to make them as responsive as possible to single-parent needs. Teachers and principals as well may be able to identify unmet needs—child care for teacher conference and snow days, tutoring services, or after-school activities for adolescents, for example.

Investigate the range of organizations operating in your community and learn what service programs local groups have run successfully in the past. Organizations to look at might include the PTA, YMCA or YWCA, Jaycees, Junior League, Kiwanis, Rotary, Soroptimists, Parents Without Partners, fraternal or sororal groups, religious organizations, and senior citizens' clubs. Do any of the organizations have large numbers of single parents as members?

Consider what resources individual organizations will be able to bring to a new project. Can the group make a continuing commitment to funding or fund raising? Does the organization contain highly motivated individuals who will be able to help initiate a program, organize volunteers or hire staff, and raise money? Perhaps one group can supply volunteers and another primarily be a source of funds. Learn how individual organizations handle requests for funding—what their requirements, procedures, and deadlines are. Groups may also have ties to local business or industry as a source of grants.

Social service agencies may be able to provide expertise about program content. University extension programs may have child development or social work faculty and students willing to help design and staff programs or collect information about the local population of single-parent families.

Now is the time to consider what kind of service might be provided. Some possible projects are briefly described next.

CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Today, for the increasing numbers of mothers (both single and married) working outside the home, the shortage of suitable child care has become a major problem. No one knows exactly how many children are unsupervised after school, but according to one estimate, at least two million children between the ages of 7 and 13 are left alone to care for themselves. Quality child care is difficult to find and often quite expensive.

One alternative to traditional child care is to use the school for extended-day programs and establish day care or activity programs before and after school. Many such programs now exist all across the country. Other programs use storefronts, church basements, or playgrounds to house their activities.

One of the most well-known and comprehensive programs, the School-Aged Child Care Project in Wellesley, Massachusetts, has developed specific procedures for designing and implementing child care programs for school-aged children. The project also offers technical assistance to others around the country who are interested in starting such programs. A recently published handbook, *School-Aged Child Care: An Action Manual* written by the Wellesley group provides step-by-step procedures for developing these child care programs and describes several model projects around the country.

Child care programs can be administered directly by the schools or school districts. They can also be based in schools or other facilities but administered by an outside organization. What works in one community may not work in another. In some communities, senior citizens' centers have offered day care programs, and resulting relationships between the young and the elderly have been of great benefit to both. PTAs or other organizations might also encourage and assist local businesses in setting up child care programs for their employees.

OTHER PROJECTS

Opportunities for other creative and helpful services are plentiful. Some suggested activities are:

Child care cooperatives. If reasonably priced child care is limited in the area, an

organization might wish to run a cooperative where babysitting services are shared among single-parent families. Watching someone else's children for an evening is then exchanged by a parent for an equal number of hours of child care by another member of the cooperative.

Displaced homemaker and job retraining programs. Women heading single-parent families often suffer economic difficulties—finding a job that pays well enough to support a family or reentering the job market following many years' absence. Organizations could consider running programs to teach job skills to single parents with a lack of work experience, formal education, or professional training. Custodial fathers may also need "training"—in the domestic skills. In a Seattle program, women are teaching such fathers cooking, laundry, cleaning, and child care skills.

Hotline services. Telephone services can be used for a variety of purposes. Some schools offer "homework hotlines" for students having problems with assignments. Other groups run "telephone reassurance services" where children regularly check in with counselors, senior citizens, and other volunteers who are available to go to the home in emergencies. Some hotlines serve parents who, in times of stress, can call and talk to mental health professionals or be referred to local helping agencies.

Survival courses for children. Programs have been designed to teach children who spend time alone at home what to do in case of burglary, fire, storms, or other emergencies. Some courses teach domestic skills as well, such as cooking, sewing, and cleaning.

"Big Brother-Big Sister" programs. These services match a child from a single-parent family with another adult as a way of providing the child with an additional adult role model.

Self-help groups. Single parents may feel the need to join a group of people who share the same family situation and face similar problems. If there is no such group already in the community, another organization may assist single parents in setting one up. The local group may then want to affiliate with one of a number of national organizations run to benefit single parents. The *Encyclopedia of Associations,* published by Gale Research and found in the public library, lists these organizations, their addresses, and descriptions of their programs. There are special interest groups for fathers' and mothers' rights, single adoptive parents, joint custody, and mothers without custody. Many of the major religious denominations also run groups for single parents.

Awareness programs. An organization such as the local PTA may feel that a community priority is to raise the level of understanding about single-parent families. Its members could present workshops to other groups to educate them about issues that may keep single parents and their children from fully participating in community life.

Scholarship programs. Groups might consider offering scholarships or special funding awards to children from single-parent families who often lack money for "extras" such as recreational activity fees, sports club memberships, or camping program fees. The PTA might subsidize athletic costs or musical instrument rentals for such students.

Reduced fees and memberships. Groups could consider setting membership fees on a sliding scale according to ability to pay or approving a special rate for single-parent families. This could become a community-wide project with zoos, museums, athletic clubs, golf courses, etc., asked to cooperate.

Political action. Some organizations might prefer to take direct political action on behalf of single-parent families. PTAs, for example, might ask their state organization to lobby the state legislature for changes in divorce, custody, and parental kidnapping laws. Or, a group could press the local judicial system for tougher enforcement of court-ordered child support payments.

These are just a few suggestions. Your organization may be able to discover other needs of local single-parent families and fashion a program uniquely suited to your community.

Part 3: PROGRAM RESOURCES

INSTRUCTIONS

Material is provided in this guide for two one-hour presentations on single-parent families. The first meeting should be an informational discussion of these families; the second should be held to consider what additional services for them are needed within the community. Following are some suggestions on how best to use this guide and to present a successful program.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

All parents should be invited and encouraged to attend. The second meeting particularly will address topics of interest to families with working parents and families undergoing change or stress as well as single-parent families.

Sponsoring group members should personally invite other community, religious, and school leaders. Representatives from organizations such as the YMCA, Junior League, Parents Without Partners, Kiwanis, Lions Club, and others could be asked to participate.

Meetings should be scheduled at times convenient for working parents—on weekends or in the evening. Child care should be provided, and perhaps transportation can be arranged for those who need it.

ANNOUNCING THE PROGRAM

The program should be well-publicized. The school might send letters home to parents or publish a notice in its newsletter. (A Sample Letter is included in this booklet.) Announcements can be made at meetings of other community groups. Press releases should be sent to the local newspaper, radio and television stations, and church and synagogue bulletins.

Participants at the first meeting should be asked to add their names and addresses to a sign-up sheet. Postcards can be sent to them as reminders of the time and date of the second meeting.

SELECTING A LEADER

This guide has been designed to provide even those with little experience in conducting meetings with enough material to present the program successfully. Perhaps a group member with special interest in this topic—a divorced or widowed parent—could lead the program.

An inexperienced group leader might consider presenting the program jointly with someone else—a local "expert." This person could be, for example, a psychologist or therapist who has counseled families undergoing divorce, a teacher who has worked with children from single-parent families, or a marriage and family life professor from a nearby university or extension service. The school principal may be especially interested in participating in the second meeting when school procedures are being discussed.

USING THE GUIDE

This guide consists of three parts. Parts 1 and 2 include the content of the first and second meetings respectively. Part 3 contains "program resources"—materials designed to enrich the program for both presenter and participant. They include:

References. Major sources for the information given in Parts 1 and 2 are named within those sections. The group leader should assess the local audience and decide whether these specific references need to be mentioned during the program. Some leaders and participants, however, will want to read beyond the material offered in the booklet. For that reason, this list provides references to the pro-

fessional literature from which the information was drawn.

Support Materials. This list gives more information about existing programs and publications that can assist the group in designing local services for single-parent families.

Sample Letter to Parents. If needed, groups can tailor this letter to the local situation and use it to invite parents to the program.

Books for Adults, Books for Children. These bibliographies of popular books—one for adult readers, the other for children—discuss topics such as divorce, death of a parent, and single parenting. The lists may be copied and given to participants and provided to school and public libraries.

Participant Response Sheet. This page should be copied and given to participants. It should not be used as a test, but rather to highlight information, raise awareness, and stimulate discussion.

Leader's Evaluation. This should be filled out by the group leader and sent to the address indicated after the two meetings have been held. The leader should seriously consider asking participants to respond to a short evaluation after one or both of the meetings. The evaluation could ask participants to rate their satisfaction with the leader, program content, and discussion and to suggest areas for improvement.

Presentation Aids. These nine pages graphically present some of the program information. They can be reproduced on transparency sheets by a photocopying machine and displayed on an overhead projector. Or, they may be copied and distributed to participants. They can be used by the leader as a rough outline of the content of the meetings.

PRESENTING PART 1

The purpose of this first meeting is to raise awareness about single parents and their families. Therefore, information about these families, based on census data and scientific research, is provided in Part 1 of this booklet. If the group leader, in preparing for the program, wishes to read about the topic in more detail, he or she should use the list of references that follow these instructions.

Experienced leaders may want to design their own program. For those needing more direction, the following is a suggested outline for the first meeting:

(5 minutes) As people arrive, give them a copy of the Participant Response sheet. Reassure them that this is not a test they will pass or fail, but an opportunity for them to think about and check their knowledge of single-parent families. They may use the sheet to jot down notes during the meeting.

(30 minutes) Present the information in Part 1. Depending on the leader's experience and style, this may be done informally or delivered very much as written. During the presentation, project the overhead pages that illustrate the information being given. (These sheets may be copied and handed out to participants instead.) Also refer the audience back, where appropriate, to corresponding questions on the Participant Response sheet.

(15 minutes) Begin a short discussion period. First, ask if the participants have any questions or comments about the material just presented. Then ask what they personally know of single-parent families. Can they think of special challenges, problems, or characteristics of these families that weren't mentioned? Can they suggest ways in which they as individuals could assist a single parent or a child from such a family? Do they know what services are available at school or in the community for these and other families? What services do they believe would be valuable to single-parent families?

(10 minutes) The preceding discussion should lead to a brief preview of the second meeting's content—considering what service(s) the group wants to provide. The leader may want to ask for volunteers and set up a committee to obtain information about the local single-parent family population and available services before the next meeting. (See next section.) Participants should be given copies of the adult and child reading lists at this time. They might also be asked to fill out a short evaluation form about the meeting. If refreshments are served now, informal discussion and planning can continue.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Some preparation must be done before the second meeting is held if the program is to be tailored to fit local situations. A committee (of sponsoring organization members or of volunteers from the first meeting) should gather the following information:

- Number of children in the school or local area from single-parent families; number of latch-key children. (School principals or classroom teachers may be able to assist here.)
- List of school policies, programs, and procedures that affect single-parent families.
- Survey of needs of single-parent families in the school or community.
- List of existing community programs and resources for single parents and their children.

If such information is not readily available, perhaps the first project of the group should be to assemble it. The school principal could be asked to cooperate in sending questionnaires home to parents—particularly to help assess what community or school services are still needed.

PRESENTING PART 2

The purpose of the second meeting is to discover what needs of single-parent families are going unmet in the school and community and to decide what the group can do to provide additional services. A suggested outline for the meeting is:

(20 minutes) Present the information in Part 2. This will provide an overview of the kinds of procedures and programs that benefit single parents and their children in the schools and of the services that assist them in the community. This pool of ideas should give participants a starting point for their discussion.

(10 minutes) Group members who gathered information about local single-parent families, school practices, and community services should make their presentation now. If a survey of single parents was taken, look carefully at these data to see what needs the parents identify as most important.

(20 minutes) Begin the discussion by asking participants to suggest a list of existing single-parent family needs such as day care services, after-school activities, job retraining, etc. Write these down on a blackboard or chart. Try to reach agreement on priorities within the list. Next, consider what changes in school procedures or new community services could meet the identified needs. Discuss which services or programs the group has the resources to organize and run. Decide on one or more projects that the group agrees to undertake.

(10 minutes) Use the final minutes of the meeting to form a plan of action. Do committees need to be appointed to investigate such things as getting volunteers,

raising funds, finding facilities, hiring staff, etc.? What steps to organize a project must be taken next? Do other key organizations or people need to be consulted and involved? Should someone investigate programs similar to the one the group proposes to offer? (Some parent training, child care, peer counseling, and single parent programs in other communities are listed in the Support Materials.) Agree on reasonable deadlines for the tasks that are assigned, and try to set at least a tentative date and time for the next meeting.

Following the second meeting, the group leader should fill out the evaluation form provided in this booklet.

REFERENCES

The following references include the major sources from which the statistical and research data in this program were drawn. Group leaders might want to refer to them for more detailed information, if needed.

Barry, A. "A research project on successful single-parent families." *The American Journal of Family Therapy*. Vol. 7, No. 3, 1979, 65-73.

Glick, P.C. *Children from One-Parent Families: Recent Data and Projections.* Paper presented at the Special Institute on Critical Issues in Education, sponsored by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, Washington, D.C., June, 1981.

Goetting, A. "Divorce outcome research." *Journal of Family Issues,* Vol. 2, 1981, 350-378.

Hetherington, E.M., Cox, M., and Cox, R. "The aftermath of divorce." J.H. Stevens and M. Mathers, *Mother-Child, Father-Child Relationships.* (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1978).

National Association of Elementary School Principals. "When the family comes apart: What schools need to know." *Principal,* Vol. 59, No. 1, October, 1979. "One-parent families and their children: The school's most significant minority." *Principal,* Vol. 60, No. 1, September, 1980. "One-parent families: Summary report." *Principal,* Vol. 62, No. 1, September, 1982.

The National PTA. "Strengthening the family." *PTA Today,* Vol. 7, No. 8, May, 1982.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Current Population Reports: Household and Family Characteristics: March, 1981.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982).

Wallerstein, J.S., and Kelly, J.B. *Surviving the Breakup.* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

SUPPORT MATERIALS

The following materials provide additional information and suggestions about setting up programs and services for single-parent families by schools and other organizations.

- *Exploring Childhood* series on single-parent families by the Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02160.
- *School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual* by Ruth Kramer Baden, Andrea Genser, James A. Levine, and Michelle Seligson, Auburn House Publishing Co., Boston, MA, 1982.
- *Active Parenting: A Trainer's Manual* by Shelley E. Leavitt. The book describes a program of eight weekly sessions to help parents who are having trouble managing a child's behavior. For information on ordering, write to Communications & Public Service Division, Boys Town, NE 68010.
- *Help for Children of Divorce at School and at Home* by John Ourth, available from Good Apple Publishing Co., Carthage, IL, 1983.
- Materials produced by the Divorce Adjustment Project at Virginia Commonwealth

University: *Children's Support Group: A Procedures Manual, Single Parents Support Group: Leader's Manual, Parenting Alone Together: A Procedures Manual,* and *Children's Support Group Training Videotape*. Information on cost can be obtained by writing to Divorce Adjustment Project, Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Psychology, 806 W. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23284.

- *Stages: Education for Families in Transition* developed by the Irvine Unified School District. The program provides a 38-lesson curriculum to teach children how to cope with divorce, death, moving, and other major life changes; intervention strategies for dealing with behavior problems; a parent education program; a staff development program; and individual or group lessons for counselors and psychologists working with these children. Included are audio tapes, task cards, workbooks, and a poster. Write to Project Stages, 31-B W. Yale Loop, Irvine, CA 92714.

- *One-Person Parenting* is a support and discussion program for single parents. Includes a 35 mm filmstrip and cassette tape. Information on ordering is available from the Program Director, Texas PTA, 408 W. 11th Street, Austin, TX 78701.

- A description of how to run a parent training program in the schools is provided in *Responsive Parent Program,* by Marilyn Clark-Hall, *et.al.*, published by H & H Enterprises, Inc., Box 1070, 946 Tennessee Street, Lawrence, KS 66044, in 1977.

- *Single Parent,* a magazine published by Parents Without Partners, regularly addresses topics such as divorce, child rearing, remarriage, day care, and others of interest to single parents. Write to *Single Parent,* Suite 1000, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814-3094.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

These are the answers to questions on the Participant Response sheet which follows in this section. The sheet may be removed, copied, and given to participants; these answers are for the group leader's use.

1. Almost 7 million or 22% (Information can be found on page 7.)
2. 72% divorced or separated, 11% widowed, 17% never married (Page 7)
3. 20% or one in five (Page 7)
4. (To be provided by local school)
5. In nine of ten cases or 90% (Page 8)
6. $7,000 (Page 8)
7. Financial pressures, arranging for adequate child care, fatigue, finding a job, completing daily tasks, loneliness, loss of self-esteem. (Page 8)
8. Feeling loss of children, arranging time with children, feelings of rootlessness. (Page 9)
9. Behavior problems at home—disobedience, temper tantrums, pouting, etc.; bodily complaints—headaches, stomachaches; bedtime problems; academic and conduct problems in school; social difficulties with peers. (Page 10)
10. Close relationship with noncustodial parent; cooperation between parents in child rearing; support from relatives and friends. (Page 9)
11. After-school activities, hotline service, child care cooperatives, inservice training for school personnel, peer counseling for children, adult education courses, etc. (Pages 13-19)

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Franklin School PTA

Dear Parent,

As you know, raising a family isn't an easy task. The Franklin School PTA invites you to a two-part program, called *Single Parents and Their Families: Involving School and Community*. The program is designed to help all parents become aware of the difficulties that stressed, busy, and single-parent families face and to generate discussion of what the school and community can do to help today's changing families.

Some of the issues that will be discussed are the need for before- and after-school child care for working parents; behavior, emotional, and academic problems experienced by children whose families are undergoing change; and how to help children adjust to changes in the family.

Part 1 of the program will be presented October 5th from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the Franklin School library. Part 2 is scheduled for November 2nd at the same time and location. Child care will be provided free of charge during the program.

This is a program for *all parents*. Invite your friends and other interested community members.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Jane Smith
Franklin School PTA President

Single Parents and Their Families

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Andrew, J. *Divorce and the American Family.* (New York: Watts, 1978).

Atlas, S.L. *Single Parenting: A Practical Resource Guide.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981).

Bosco, A. *Successful Single Parenting.* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third, 1978).

Caine, L. *Widow.* (New York: Bantam, 1975).

Galper, M. *Joint Custody and Co-parenting: Sharing Your Child Equally—A Source Book for the Separated or Divorced Family.* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1980).

Hope, K., & Young, N. *Momma Handbook: The Source Book for Single Mothers.* (New York: New American Library, 1976).

Jackson, M., & Jackson, J. *"Your Father's Not Coming Home Anymore."* (New York: Richard Marek, 1981).

Klein, C. *The Single Parent Experience.* (New York: Avon Books, 1978).

Pincus, L. *Death and the Family.* (New York: Random, 1976).

Reed, B. *I Didn't Plan to Be a Single Parent!* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1981).

Rowlands, P. *Saturday Parent: A Book for Separated Families.* (New York: Continuum, 1982).

Salk, L. *What Every Child Would Like Parents to Know about Divorce.* (New York: Warner Books, 1979).

Turow, R. *Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore.* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1978).

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

FICTION

Alexander, A. *To Live a Lie.* (New York: Atheneum, 1975). Ages 8-12.

Blume, J. *It's Not the End of the World.* (Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press, 1972). Ages 9-12.

Girion, B. *A Tangle of Roots.* (New York: Scribner, 1979). Ages 12 and up.

Goff, B. *Where Is Daddy?* (New York: Beacon, 1969). Ages 4-8.

Hunt, I. *William.* (New York: Ace, 1981). Ages 10 and up.

Le Shan, E. *What's Going to Happen to Me?* (Bristol, FL: Four Winds, 1978). Ages 8 and up.

Lexau, J.M. *Emily and the Klunky Baby and the Next Door Dog.* (New York: Dial Press, 1972). Ages 4-8.

Lexau, J.M. *Me Day.* (New York: Dial Press, 1972). Ages 7-10.

Mann, P. *My Dad Lives in a Downtown Hotel.* (New York: Doubleday, 1973). Ages 9-11.

Sallis, S. *An Open Mind.* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978). Ages 12 and up.

Sinberg, S. *Divorce Is a Grown-up Problem.* (New York: Avon Books, 1978). Ages 4-6.

Tax, M. *Families.* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1981). Ages 3-6.

Zolotow, C. *A Father Like That.* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971). Ages 4-7.

NONFICTION

Berger, T. *How Does It Feel When Your Parents Get Divorced?* (New York: Messner, 1977). Ages 6-11.

Casey, J. *"What's a Divorce Anyway?"* (New York: Vantage, 1981). Ages 6-10.

Fayerweather Street School. Edited by E. Rofes. *The Kids Book of Divorce.* (Lexington, MA: Lewis Publishing Co., 1981). Ages 7 and up.

Gardner, R.A. *The Boys and Girls Book about Divorce.* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970). Ages 7-14.

Gardner, R.A. *The Boys and Girls Book about One Parent Families.* (New York: Putnam Publishing Group, 1978). Ages 7-14.

Krementz, J. *How It Feels When a Parent Dies.* (New York: Knopf, 1981). All ages.

List, J.A. *The Day the Loving Stopped.* (New York: Fawcett, 1981).

Pursell, M.S. *A Look at Divorce.* (Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1976). Ages 3-7.

Richards, A., & Willis, I. *How to Get It Together When Your Parents Are Coming Apart.* (New York: McKay, 1976). Ages 7 and up.

The following books contain additional bibliographies and information about written and audio visual materials for children.

Bernstein, J.E. *Books to Help Children Cope with Separation and Loss.* Second Ed. (New York: Bowker, 1983).

Dreyer, S.S. *Bookfinder: A Guide to Children's Literature about the Needs and Problems of Youth—Aged 2-15.* (Circle Pine, MN: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1981).

Horner, C.T. *The Single Parent Family in Children's Books.* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1978).

Single Parents and Their Families

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE

1. Of the more than 31 million families in the United States today, how many do you think are single-parent families?

2. How many of these families have parents who have been divorced or separated, widowed, and never married?

3. What percentage of children under 18 now live in single-parent families?

4. How many children in your local school do you know that live in single-parent families?

5. How often, would you estimate, is the divorced woman awarded custody of the couple's children?

6. Is the average income of a three-person family headed by a woman close to $7,000, $10,000 or $13,000 per year?

7. Can you think of some problems that might be faced by single parents who have custody of children?

8. What difficulties might face a noncustodial parent?

9. What are some problems that may be experienced by children following the separation or divorce of their parents?

10. What do you think might help children adjust to living in a single-parent family?

11. Can you suggest some projects that the school or community might undertake to help single parents and their children?

Single Parents and Their Families

LEADER'S EVALUATION

Please help us evaluate this program by filling out this questionnaire after you have presented the program. Your feedback will enable us to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the program and help us develop more effective programs in the future. Please send your completed questionnaire to: The National PTA, 700 N. Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611-2571.

1. Who presented the program?
   _____ Parent _____ Principal
   _____ Teacher Other *(please specify)*
   _____ Counselor

2. Was this a PTA-sponsored presentation?
   _____ Yes _____ No
   If *not*, who sponsored it? _____

3. Where was the program presented?
   _____ Elementary school
   _____ Junior high or middle school
   _____ High school
   _____ Other (please specify) _____

4. Where is your community located?
   _____ City greater than 500,000 people
   _____ City less than 500,000 people
   _____ Rural area
   _____ Suburban area

Questions 5-8 refer only to Part 1 of the program. If Part 1 was not presented, go on to question 9.

5. How many people attended Part 1? _____

6. If people from other organizations (e.g., Kiwanis, YMCA) attended, what organizations were they from?

7. How useful was Part 1 for promoting awareness of the problems and issues affecting single-parent families?
   _____ Useful
   _____ Somewhat useful
   _____ Neither useful nor useless
   _____ Somewhat useless
   _____ Useless

8. In general, what was the reaction of the participants to Part 1?

Questions 9-13 refer only to Part 2 of the program. If Part 2 was not presented, go on to question 14.

9. How many people attended Part 2? _____

10. If people from other organizations (e.g., Kiwanis, YMCA) attended Part 2, what organizations were they from?

11. How useful was Part 2 for encouraging the development of specific school or community projects?
    _____ Useful
    _____ Somewhat useful
    _____ Neither useful nor useless
    _____ Somewhat useless
    _____ Useless

12. Was a specific school or community activity or project initiated as a result of this program?

_____ Yes _____ No

If *yes*, what was it?

If *no*, please comment why you think none was initiated.

13. In general, what was the reaction of the participants to Part 2?

14. Using the scale below, please rate the usefulness of these sections of the programs.

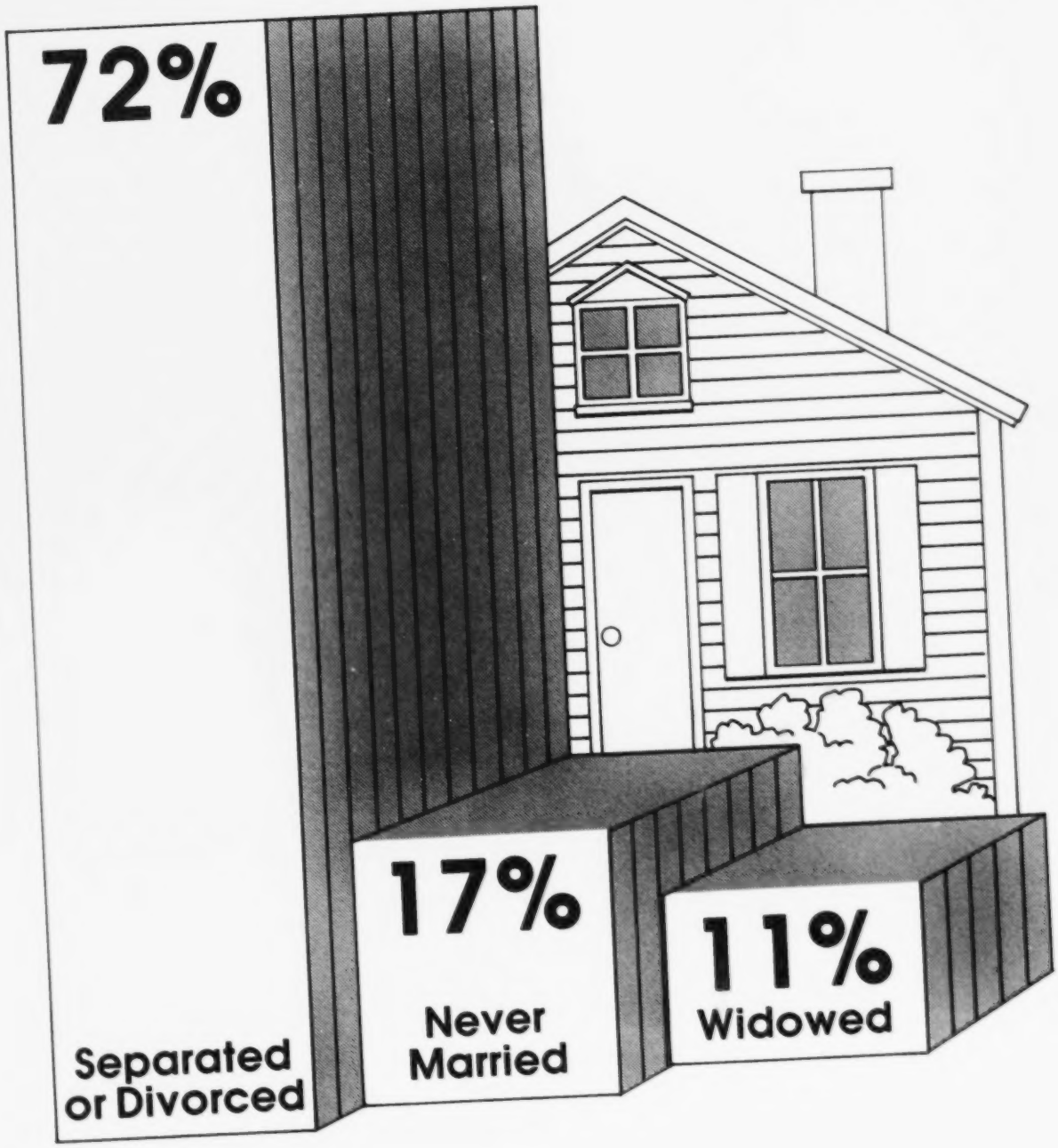
5 = Useful
4 = Somewhat useful
3 = Neither useful nor useless
2 = Somewhat useless
1 = Useless

	Rating
Instructions	_____
Part 1	_____
Part 2	_____
Participant Response	_____
Presentation Aids	_____
Reference and Support Materials	_____
Book Lists	_____

15. How could this program be improved?

PRESENTATION AIDS

Seven Million Single-Parent Families



1983 Figures

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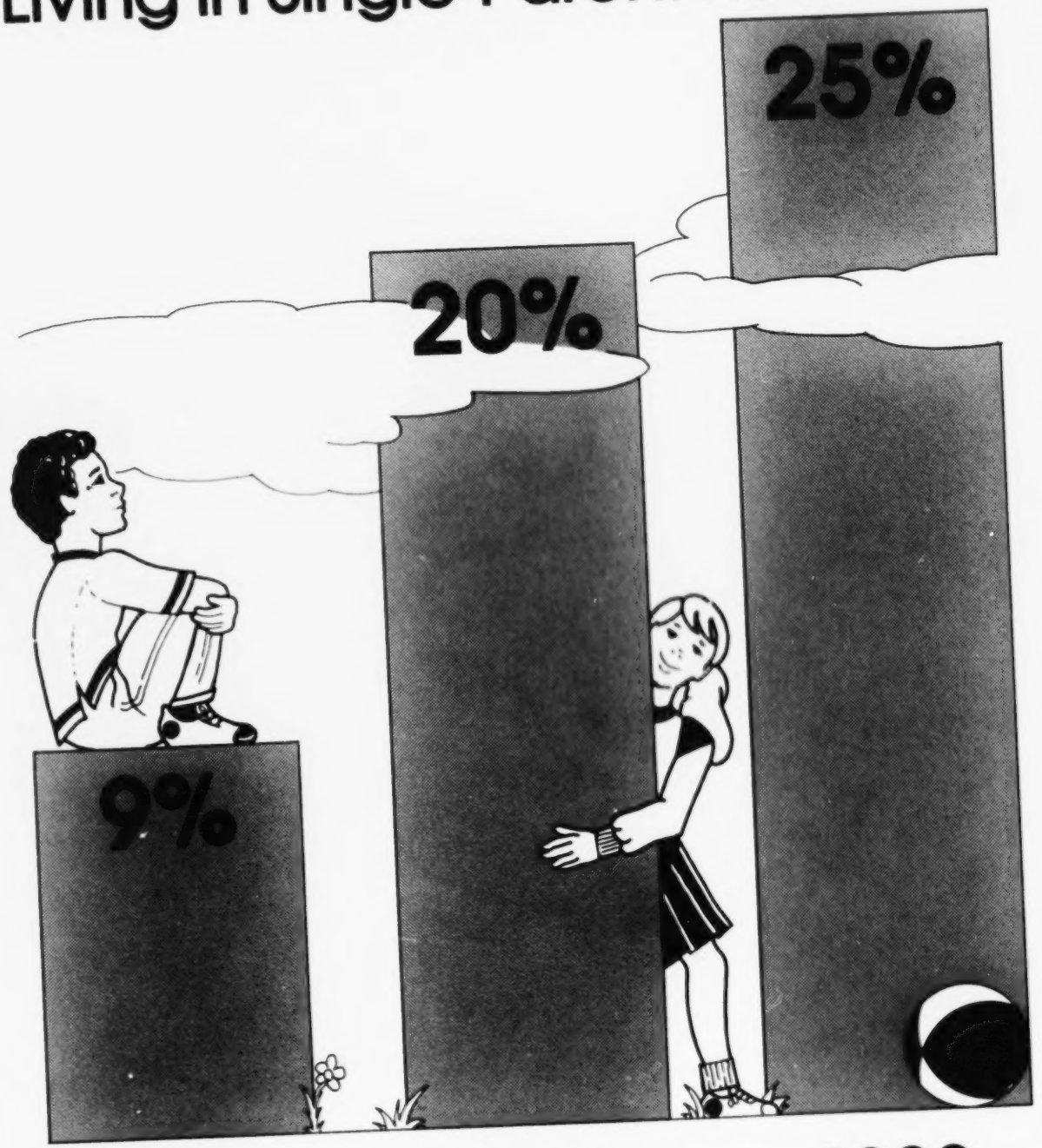
Number of Children under 18 Living in Single-Parent Homes



1960
1 of 11

1980
1 of 5

1990
1 of 4

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Problems Reported by Single Parents

Economic

- Decline in income
- Adjustment to altered lifestyle

Practical

- Household management and tasks
- Child care
- Job
- Major decisions about children

Social

- Loneliness
- Loss of married friends
- Difficulty meeting new friends

Emotional

- Loss of identity, self-esteem, status
- Depression, anxiety
- Loss of children, home
- Feeling incompetent

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Annual Income

1983 Figures

Mother, two children
$7,035

Two parents, two children
$20,000

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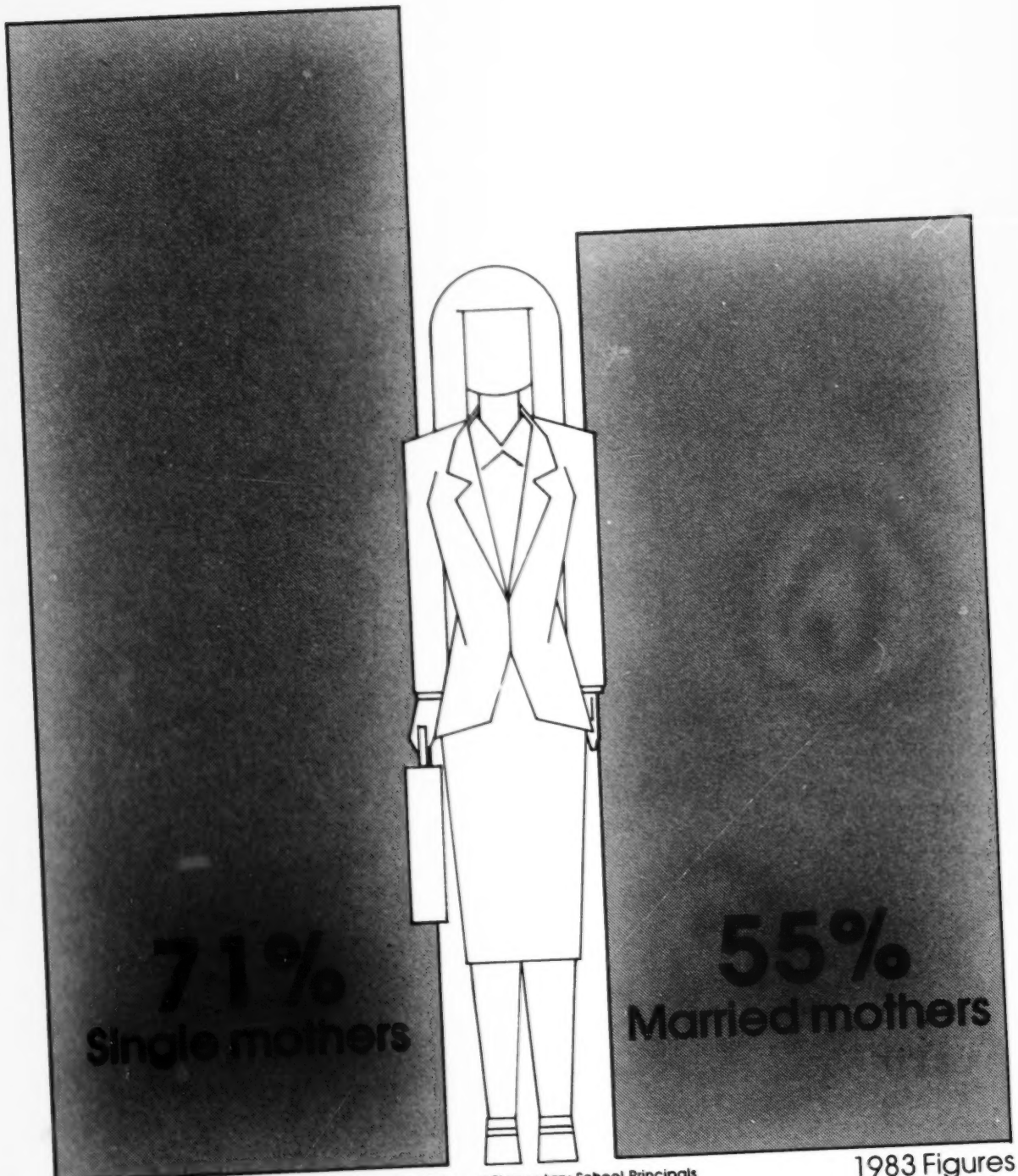
Women in the Labor Force



1983 Figures

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Factors that Help Children Adjust to Divorce

Close relationship with noncustodial parent.

Minimal conflict between parents.

Parental consistency in child rearing and discipline.

Supportive relatives and friends.

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Impact of Divorce on Children

AT HOME

Bedtime problems – nightmares, bedwetting, refusing to go to bed or to sleep alone.

Bodily complaints – headaches, stomach aches, leg cramps.

Disruptive behaviors – temper tantrums, whining, pouting, demanding, complaining.

Noncompliance – disobedience.

AT SCHOOL

Acting out – being disruptive, aggressive, obstinate, uncooperative.

Acting moody – sulking, pouting.

Seeking attention – showing off, being loud or bossy.

Expressing feelings of worthlessness, incompetence, or insecurity.

Not paying attention – daydreaming.

Assuming adult-like behaviors and attitudes.

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What the School Can Do

Develop a record-keeping system for keeping track of family changes.

Be sensitive to the rights and the role of noncustodial parent.

Provide inservice training for school personnel.

Review how the school's curriculum and academic materials portray family life.

Offer before- and after-school child care and activity programs.

Hold adult education courses or parenting programs.

Sponsor "parent" rather than "mother" or "father" activities and schedule parent-school events at convenient times.

Set up peer counseling and support groups for children.

Provide information to parents about community resources and services.

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What the Community Can Do

Develop after-school child care or activities.

Encourage organizations and businesses to offer day care services.

Organize child care cooperatives.

Set up displaced homemaker and job retraining programs.

Provide "hotline" services for parents and children.

Offer survival courses for children.

Sponsor big brother- and big sister-like programs.

Organize self-help and support groups for single parents.

Present awareness programs and workshops in the community.

Develop scholarship programs for children.

Offer reduced fees and membership for single-parent families.

Organize political action activities.

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